Records and Recollections by Browneyesparker

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The many times Mike lies on the floor and listens to sad songs while he thinks about El and the one time he does it with her. (This kind of started out with a crack head canon and now here we are.)

Records and Recollections

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“now and then I call your name and suddenly your face appears.”

“Mike, buddy, you really need to stop this!” Dustin says as Mike replays “Please Come Home For Christmas” for what seems like the 100th time in the last hour. “I say this as your friend, this isn’t good for you!”

“You’re being a tad bit dramatic,” Lucas adds pragmatically, staring at his best friend lying in the middle of the basement floor with a portable record player by his side.

Mike eyes both Dustin and Lucas then defiantly starts the album again as the song comes to an end without saying a word.

“I guess this means you *don’t* want to come to the arcade with us?” Dustin asks.

Mike shakes his head once.

Lucas sighs. “Come on, this is getting ridiculous. She’s been gone for over a month now. You can’t just lay here, mourning her and listening to music for the rest of your life. El’s not coming back—”

Mike stares at the ceiling and doesn’t tell him that he doesn’t believe it. If El were really gone, he’d *know*. He would feel it as more than just a dull ache in his chest. He doesn’t tell him because Lucas wouldn’t understand. He’s more thinking than feeling. He turns up the music a notch, signaling the end of the conversation.

Lucas huffs and opens his mouth to keep talking but Will puts a small hand on his arm and shakes his head.

“Just leave him alone,” he says quietly. “Let him do what he needs to do to get through this.”

Lucas sighs deeply and shoves his winter hat back on his head. “Fine. We’re going to the arcade, Mike where it’s *fun*! See you later!”

Dustin and Will both say goodbye even though they know they won't get much of a response from him and then they trudge up the stairs after Lucas.

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"Did you get into a lot of trouble for getting into a fight at school?" Dustin asks as he stumbles down into the basement, still high on adrenaline from watching Mike try and beat somebody up for calling Will a *'Zombie Boy'*.

"No D&D for a week," Mike answers from what's become his customary spot on the floor.

He's holding a package of frozen peas against his eye, there's dried blood on his lip and the singer on the record is singing *"I'm going down, I'm going down 'cause you ain't around. My whole world's upside down,"* over and over again.

"That sucks. . ." Dustin trails off and pauses when he realizes Mike is listening to music again. It's one of his mom's favorite songs. "You do realize she's talking about a *dude*," he tells him.

Mike lifts the bag off his eye and looks at him. "So what? It speaks to me."

"So, did you go through your mom's records or something? I know for a fact, somebody *our* age wouldn't own *this* album."

"Are you making fun of me?" Mike asks, wincing as he puts the peas back on his eye because it's started to tingle a little but mostly because he doesn't want to see the judgement or even pity that's certainly going to be in Dustin's face.

"No! Not at all!" Dustin answers a little too quickly.

Mike wants to tell him that he just *really* misses Eleven and wants her to come back. But he knows Dustin is certain that she's gone for good. So, he doesn't tell him. When he looks again, Dustin mumbles a quick goodbye and leaves him alone in peace.

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It's early, *early* Saturday morning and Mike had tossed and turned most of the night. Finally, he gets out of bed and goes downstairs, he flips through his mother's record collection, looking for something else to listen to. He finds one by Shirley Bassey and remembers his mom listening to it a few days earlier while she'd been cleaning the house.

He takes it down to the basement with him and puts it on his record player, he lies on his stomach and watches the vinyl spin 'round and 'round as he listens to the words of the song and feels them on a spiritual level.

"Now and then I call your name and suddenly your face appears," Shirley sings tenderly as Mike buries his face in his arms and releases a breath that does nothing to loosen the tightness in his chest. "*But it's just a crazy game when it ends, it ends in tears."*

He wakes up a little while later and his arm is asleep, the record is still spinning but the music has stopped playing. He sits up and tries to get his bearings, for a second he forgets where he was because he was caught up in a dream where it was him and Eleven and they were together. *Actually* together, he got to talk to her and he got to hold her hand again.

His heart sank into his stomach when he realizes it's just a dream.

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He's lying on his grandmother's living room floor, its summertime and he and Nancy and Holly are staying with her for a week. Nancy's chatting quietly with Steve on the phone while their grandmother is sewing long strips of fabric together for a quilt. Mike has a half-eaten ice cream sandwich on his stomach and Billie Holiday is on the record player.

"It makes me think of your grandfather," his grandmother explains to him when she gets up and starts it again, she gets a far off look in her eye and Mike feels something that's akin to a kindred spirit with her.

He gets up and goes to give her a hug. It's the only thing he can do, he can't tell her that he understands how she feels. They haven't told

anybody outside of Hawkins about El or the strange events that had happened last October.

She hugs him back and he buries his face in her shoulder, finding comfort in the smell of Chantilly perfume and baby powder and sugar cookies.

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"Please get up," Karen whispers, lying down on the floor next to him and stroking his hair away from his forehead. "Please Mike."

A different Karen is singing mournfully from the record player, *"and keeping to himself, he plays the game. Without her end, it always ends the same. While life goes all around him everywhere, he's playing solitaire."*

". . .just tell me what's wrong," Karen continues. "I want to help you, honey. Please, *please* let me help you—"

Mike wants to say *just leave me here to die* but he doesn't have the energy to say it. Doesn't have the energy to tell her to leave even though it's on the tip of his tongue. So, they lie together on the basement floor, listening to the Carpenters and she strokes his face like she did when he was younger and had nightmares. He closes his eyes and tries not to cry.

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"This needs to stop!" Steve says as he turns off Dionne Warwick in the middle of belting out "One Less Bell To Answer". "You can mope all you want! I get that your heart is breaking but can't you do it with something a little less girly?"

"Leave me alone," Mike says.

"Wish I could but I told Nance that I'd do something to help you cheer up!" Steve answers as he takes a cassette out of the pocket of his jeans. He puts it in the tape player and George Harrison starts to sing about things passing. He sits down on the floor beside him. "This is a little better than your mom's favorite singers."

Mike doesn't say anything. He just keeps his eyes closed and listens to

the music.

Will is the next person to share music with him. “I don’t know much about what you’re going through,” he says as he gives him a tape at school. “But I guess this is what it would sound like. . . maybe.”

It’s a George Michael song that sounds so lonely it makes Mike ache all over the place. He listens to it so much, he can hear the words of the song even when he’s not playing it.

“You are the only one to stop my tears and I’m so scared of this love and if all that there is, is this fear of being used, I should go back to being lonely and confused. If I could, I would. . . I swear,” he thinks when he’s brushing his teeth or doing homework, or helping his mom do the dishes.

When October comes, everything hits the fan and the time for moping is over. Will needs him and there isn’t time to listen to sad music anymore. Then El is back and he doesn’t really need to because he gets to see her again and his heart is full of love songs.

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They are lying head-to-head on Hopper’s cabin floor, Foreigner is playing on the record player *“I’ve been waiting for someone who can make me feel alive, waiting for a girl like you to come into my life,”* as it snows outside. It’s two weeks after Christmas and it’s been awhile since they’ve seen each other because he had family in and out.

He turns his head and smiles at her when he notices she’s looking at him.

“I used to do this,” he tells her. “When you were gone, I would lie on my basement floor and listen to sad songs and miss you.”

El’s face darkens. “Were you really, *really* lonely?”

Mike pauses and then nods. “I guess I was.”

“Me too,” El tells him, she rolls over on her stomach. “Except we’re not alone anymore and we’re not going to be alone anymore. We shouldn’t think about it anymore.”

Mike's heart swells and he wants to prop himself up on his elbows and kiss her and tell her that he loves her. He's about to when the door opens and Hopper comes inside with two boxes of pizza and a bottle of Coke. He shakes snow from his hat and Mike blushes even though he *knows* the Chief probably doesn't know what he was thinking.

"You guys ready for dinner?" Hopper asks.

"Coming dad!" El answers as she scrambles to her feet and taking Mike when he stands up beside her. They turn off the music and everything is still.

The End

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Author's Note:

So yeah, this started out as a joke between me and my friend, waterbaby. But then it started to really bug me, so here we are. Me being me couldn't leave it off without a happy ending though. I hope you liked this little installment of 353 Days and that you'll drop a comment or give me some kudos if you DID enjoy it. AND for the Stranger Things crowd, I AM AN AUNTIE! My nephew was born 15 days ago and he is ADORABLE.

Until Next Time!